



SOUTHEAST NEWS

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Conference Installs Tim Downs

Our celebration of the installation of Tim Downs as our Conference Minister was indeed a true “celebration.” It began with a colorful procession of robed Southeast Conference ministers and honored participants, including Rev. Paul Sherry, President of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Rollin Russell, Southern Conference Minister and representatives for the Council of Conference Ministers, and Rev. William Green, Associate Conference Minister for Penn Northeast and our preached for the occasion.

The Call to Worship was a beautiful statement of our coming together which set the tone of our sharing of God’s love with one another (excerpts):

“We have gathered here from the clay hills of Tennessee and the piney woods of Alabama, from the Carolina lowlands and over the muddy waters of the Chattahoochee ... We have been nourished through different roots, but in the same soil, we are children of diverse origins and voices, but we sing of one Lord and proclaim one Savior ... By your Spirit you give us strength for each step of the journey, courage for the struggles that mark our lives, and hearts open and discerning to the call of justice. We come, O God, to you who through Christ reconciles and makes new ...”

Rev. Bill Green delivered a dramatic message calling us “to consider the sense in which what lies ahead is already present this very moment ... The best already is: it only awaits our recognition.” He spoke about reconciliation, and about knowing and walking with God through our sorrows and tough time as well as our easy, joyful times, for God is in the midst of all of life. And he told us “today is the day of salvation: the day to be and decide and to love.”

Another highlight of the service was the 65-voice choir, composed of members from throughout the Conference, and led by Milton Hurst. The primary anthem “Order My Steps in Your Way, Dear Lord” by Glenn Burleigh was outstanding and spirited! It set the stage for the Service of

Installation itself when all present heard the call to Tim, heard him promise to serve faithfully, and then spoke their affirmation of covenant with him to “strengthen our mutual ministry in this conference and in the United Church of Christ.” Rev. Paul Sherry then delivered a powerful prayer of installation after which Tim was declared Minister of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Next came the gifts as the conference minister’s medallion was presented, followed by the symbols of the Conference and the four associations. Dr. Tim gave a touching word of thanks after the presentations and we concluded the service.

We have been told the service was videotaped and turned out well. If you would like to view the tape, call the Conference Office and let us know. We also have available copies of Rev. Green’s message and some copies of the bulletin.

1997 Annual Meeting Faith Works

June 13-14-15, 1997

“The Tree Bears The Fruit”

This year’s Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference UCC will be at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, Alabama, June 13, 14, & 15. We are going to combine both the Annual Meeting business and a Faith Works day for a new experience this year. Our business meetings will be Friday evening and Sunday morning, our Faith Works time will be Saturday. After business on Friday, there will be worship service with our keynote address during that time. The Rev. Charles Foster, Professor of Religion and Education at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, will be our keynoter (and will give two workshops on Saturday). Saturday will be like a “Faith Works” with morning and afternoon workshops, plus an evening musical program of music indigenous to the Southeast Conference. Milton Hurst is lining this up for us! In addition to the business session on Sunday morning, there will be a closing worship service with Conference Minister Tim Downs preaching. There are also recreational opportunities at Shocco Spring. We hope our youth, those entering 6th grade and up, will also come to the Annual Meeting/Faith Works this year. I will have more information about their program in the next issue.

The focus for our Annual Meeting this year is Christian Education, which is reflected in the Saturday workshops listed (as follows:)

Saturday Workshops

Orientation to “The Inviting Word” curriculum—Ginny Nixon (Huntsville)

Overview of United Church of Christ Resources—Rev. Joe Hoffman

Talladega College: an exploration of the United Church of Christ relationship to our American Missionary Association colleges—Rev. Rodney Franklin (Birmingham 1st), organizer

Affirming Faith: a new confirmation curriculum—Rev. Joe Hoffman

“Created in God’s Image”: an introduction to the human sexuality curriculum available through the UCC—Rev. Sally Purvis

The Family: a basic resource—Ms. Patricia Goldberg, Minister for Education in the Family, UCBHM

Organizing a Christian Education Program in a Small Church—Leslie Brown (Miami)

Comparing curricula: a walk-through learning center, introducing various curricula that are available (bookstores)

Christian Education in the Life of the Church—Dr. Charles Foster, keynoter, will present a workshop.

Plan now to come and join us at Shocco Springs. Let us recapture the sense of celebration and kinship we experienced at the Service of Installation! ...

Building Together at First Thankful Baptist Church

Reported by Charlie Lord

Praise the Lord, halleluya! What an exciting and rewarding experience for those of us from Pleasant Hill, Community and Crossville, United Christian Church who went to Estill, South Carolina this January to help rebuild the First Thankful Baptist Church. Anne Ariail, Crisis

Coordinator for the Southeast Conference, had assigned us as the first work camp to help.

First Thankful Baptist's sanctuary burned February 7, 1996. With insurance money and local help, the church had put up walls and roof, but then the money ran out. Anne, through the Disaster Relief Fund, supplied sheet rock, sheet rock compound, tape and tools, etc.

Fourteen of us arrived Sunday evening, January 12, with frigid temperatures. We put up a lot of sheet rock on Monday and Tuesday, but the unheated sanctuary was too cold for "mudding" (putting compound and tape over joints and nail holes). Rev. Bennie Campbell, the pastor, bought a powerful heater-blower, so Wednesday and Thursday the women "mudded" all the sheet rock. As the church members saw how much we had accomplished, they used scaffolding and put sheet rock higher up. They worked with us, men and women, and as shyness disappeared, began to eat with us. We sang, talked, prayed and laughed together. They gave us a wonderful potluck supper Wednesday evening, and wanted to take us out to a restaurant to eat, and do anything they could to show their appreciation. They are truly well named—the First Thankful Baptist Church. They insisted on giving us a tour of Savannah before we started home.

In addition to sheet rock and "mud," we stripped tile from the floor, put insulation on walls, built stalls in a bathroom and built a small room for heating-air conditioning unit. We made a big dent in the rebuilding of the church and it was a real joy to work with the people of First Thankful Baptist. Pleasant Hill workers: Don & Jean Clark, Ralph Galt, Margaret Haun, Joy and Charlie Lord, Jack and Mary Schwarz. United Christian workers: Dick and Trudy Braun, Ben and Winn Welch.

The next weekend, January 18-19, a group of 16 youth and adults from Charleston Circular went to Estill to continue the rebuilding project. Saturday's schedule was to work alongside the youth and adults of First Thankful, then to share a cookout fellowship dinner. The Circular team worshiped with the congregation before returning home.

Ash Wednesday, February 12, Conference Minister Tim Downs traveled to Estill to personally see how the rebuilding process was coming along. There was a group from New Holland, PA, Penn Central Conference, working while he was there.

Decisions from January Board Meeting

The Board of Directors approved:

An additional \$5,000.00 to National OCWM, based on year-end figures for a total of \$15,000.

To send our OCWM quarterly next year.

A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)/United Church of Christ campus ministry program on the Furman University campus.

The redesign of clerical positions for the Conference office.

The 3 one-third-time Conference association position descriptions (see below).

Reaffirmed our partnership with the Iowa Conference—new partnership project is “A Roof for Rosie” (Iowa-Southeast Partnership will build together with Habitat a home for Rosie and her 7 children in Mississippi).

Voted to table the proposed restructuring of the Southeast Conference.

The Board of Directors will have a retreat this summer designed around discovering the “heart” of the Southeast Conference.

Letter from the Conference Minister

Dear friends,

Slowly, but surely, order and routine are beginning to make themselves increasingly evident in the Conference office. Procedures for one task or another are being set in place and the rush of details through which I have been swimming since July are beginning to assume some shape and order.

It continues to be a delight to meet you out in our congregations, as I preach from one week to the next, and meet you in committee meetings and special celebrations. There is, throughout Southeast Conference, a wonderful, joyful fellowship of faith.

The Personnel Committee has placed a report before the Board of Directors of the Conference recommending that we proceed to hire three part-time Conference associates, who will be largely responsible for the program to equip our congregations for their ministries. These Conference associate positions were designed expressly in response to the feedback we received from the hearings that we conducted in each association. The positions are as follows:

I. Conference Associate for Spiritual Development and Community Building.

Purpose:

To promote a high quality of fellowship between congregations.

To assist us in spiritual development, theological reflection and community.

Building among clergy, laity our congregations.

2. Conference Associate for Congregational Renewal and Development.

Purpose:

To promote the renewal of ministries and programs within congregations, as congregations have defined their needs.

To identify the resources within the Conference and within the United Church of Christ.

To design programs and workshops that meet the needs of congregations.

To support groups gathering in communities that are not churchled by the United Church of Christ, whether they are faith communities, seed fellowships, or other forms of organization.

3. Conference Associate for Mission Development and UCC Identity.

To promote our United Church of Christ Identity throughout the Conference.

To promote ecumenical partnerships.

To identify resources to interpret local, national, and world mission to help our congregations develop their connections with and increase their knowledge of the United Church of Christ and its mission.

All three persons will be hired by the Board of Directors of the Conference and be responsive to the Conference Minister. The positions will be geographically deployed. We recognize that as one-third-time positions, there are limitations to what we can accomplish, yet we are sure that we can provide a meaningful level of program to you.

We are continuing to restructure the Conference Office and look forward to a new configuration of staffing and an expansion of our computer abilities. These are challenging times that lie before us, but I am excited at the possibilities. I am excited, too, to be able to share in these challenges with you, a spiritual and faithful people.

In Christ,
Timothy C. Downs
Conference Minister

Message From the Moderator

Greetings!

This is a very special time for us in the Southeast Conference. While our conference minister has been with us since July 1996 (he arrived with the Olympics), his installation has just taken place Sunday, March 2nd. We were all looking forward to this special occasion because it solidifies Dr. Downs' presence in this place and our knowledge that we are all a part of "new beginnings" in the Southeast Conference.

At our January Board of Directors meeting at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, Alabama (the site of our Annual Meeting June 13-15, 1997) there was a true sense that we—your Board of Directors and Conference Minister—were about the business of addressing a myriad of issues, received from so many of you in different settings.

Mark your calendars, join us at the Annual Meeting and make a commitment to work with us to make a real difference at all levels of our conference—the local church and the association. In keeping with the theme for UCC Women's Week, from the Program Resource for Women, "Spirit of the Healing God," I share these words that we can use to undergird us as we move forward.

"Spirit of the healing God, journey with us now. Spirit of the healing God, journey with us now. Guide us, hear us, heal us, use us. Spirit of the healing God, journey with us now."

Peace and love,
Annie W. Neal

Off to Ecuador ... In Christian Love

Bill Tweed and Rip Hardman (LaGrange United), Louise Cox, Rodney, Mary & Leigh Harmon (LaFayette, Pleasant Grove), Chris Hester (Roanoke, Antioch) and Lorna Munn (Chris's fiancée) are all part of a group going to Kuito and Caliata, Ecuador, South America to work with SIFAT (Servants in Faith and Technology). There will be a group working in Caliata who will build an addition to a small church. Medical teams will work in both areas, and Bible School will be held in both areas.

The people they will be helping are Quichua Indians, who are descendants of the Incas, and they will be dealing with a total of four languages! They leave Sunday, March 16 and will return later in the month. We look forward to pictures and a story of their experiences when they come home.

Proposed Conference Associate Staff Positions

From the time Tim Downs came on board, he began to ask questions and to listen to the responses. At the association meetings, Tim asked, “What has the Conference done for you, failed to do or done poorly? What immediate goals would you like the Conference to work toward?” He took this feedback to the Program Planning Committee for reflection and refinement. Then, in collaboration with the Personnel Committee, the following three positions were designed: 1. Conference Associate for Spiritual Development and Community Building; 2. Conference Associate for Congregational Renewal and Development; 3. Conference Associate for Mission Development and Identity. The real difference between how the positions were viewed a year ago and now is that each associate will be able to be more focused, as each will have his/her own area of expertise to share with one another, with the churches and wherever it is needed in the Conference. The positions may be either lay or ordained. Purpose and job descriptions of each follow.

General: All three Conference associate staff persons:

Will be involved in regular staff meetings and annual goal setting.

Will be accountable to the Conference Minister.

Will be geographically deployed with the primary contact for the Conference in the area in which they live.

Will maintain a pastoral relationship with the congregations in their area, in collaboration with the Conference Minister.

Position 1: Conference Associate for Spiritual Development and Community Building.

Purpose: To promote a high quality of fellowship, spiritual development, theological reflection and community building among clergy, laity, congregations.

Job Description: Person will be trained in the use of National resources, function at a regional level, and maintain communication between and among the congregations and the Conference by phone, internet, etc.

Position 2: Conference Associate for Congregational Renewal and Development.

Purpose: To promote renewal of ministries and program within congregations.

Job Description: Person will do congregational development & congregational renewal, seed communities & fellowships, identify resources within the Conference and the UCC to design programs and workshops that meet the needs which congregations have identified, be trained by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, help churches with identity and secure resources for their ministries.

Position 3: Conference Associate for Mission Development and Identity.

Purpose: To promote UCC identity, ecumenical partnerships, resources for local and national world mission and help connect our congregations in terms of affinity and knowledge with the UCC.

Job Description: Person will do mission development and interpretation give voice and substance to UCC identity and the Southeast Conference. These persons were approved by the Board.

We are currently accepting names, profiles and resumes of persons interested in any of these three positions. The positions will be hired by the Board. If you have questions about them, please call and speak directly with Tim Downs at 1-800-807-1993.

New Positions approved for Conference Office

At the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the office/clerical support has been redesigned. With Board approval (passed in January) there will be a full-time administrative assistant position available in the Conference office. We are seeking applications now to fill this position. Southeast Conference is an equal opportunity organization. If you are interested in this position, send your resume to the Southeast Conference Office, 756 West Peachtree Street N.W., Atlanta, GA 30308.

Job Description: Administrative Assistant will be charged with the overseeing of the office. He/she will be a key person in working with the computer consultant to computerize office. The administrative assistant will oversee the Lotus Notes communication with the National office. Training will be provided. Other duties would include: maintaining all files and records of the Conference and associations; answering the phone; serving as receptionist; maintaining office supplies; overseeing the operation and maintenance of office equipment; opening, dating and organizing all

incoming mail; overseeing printing and mailing to churches and clergy. Position is accountable to the Conference Minister and hired by the Board. Terms of employment conform to personnel policy. Personnel Committee will work with Conference Minister on annual evaluation. 40 hours per week.

A second position, Assistant for Conference Staff Support, was also presented and approved. This position is 15-25 hours per week, handles calendar, communication, logistics and travel for Conference staff; collaborates with Administrative Assistant; staffs and helps with planning Annual Meeting and board meetings; edits *Southeast News*. We anticipate that Nan Wright will be hired in this position.

A Word of Thanks

What an occasion of celebration! The Service of Installation, which was held for me as Conference Minister on March 2nd, was truly, in every way, a testimony to the vitality, vision and spirit of hope that guides us here in our beloved Southeast Conference. From the hospitality of the people of Central Congregational Church in Atlanta, to the glorious combined choir led by Milton Hurst, it was a time of rejoicing! From the exquisite eloquence of the preacher, Rev. Bill Green (who reminded us in the words of T. S. Eliot, "the end of all your exploring will be to arrive where you started and know the place for the first time," and who counseled us to "flash like a ruby," confident that God is with us, as God has been with us throughout), to the presentation of symbols and gifts from the associations, the Conference, and the Council of Conference Ministers, this was a proclamation that we are alive and faithful!

All I have left to say to you is "thank you." To the 300-plus people who gathered, this was not my event alone, but our event. To the 65 voices in the choir, what a joy to listen to you! And to all of us together as we begin this journey, what a journey we will walk, as we sing "Order My Steps in Your Way, Dear Lord." Thank you, dear friends, for being a part of this outpouring of praise and joy!

Tim Downs
Conference Minister

MINI CAMP 1997

When: April 18-19-20
Friday evening through Sunday morning
Where: Noah's Ark Retreat Center

Front Beach Road
Panama City Beach, FL 32413
(904) 235-7801/234-6062

Who: Primary, Junior, Junior Hi, Senior Hi, and Adult SEC folk
(adults are helpers and supervisors—we need you)

Cost: \$40.00 per person (\$5.00 advance registration fee)

Theme: “UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL”

APPLICATIONS DUE BY APRIL 9, 1997

Sponsored by the East Alabama/West Georgia Association.

Our newly installed conference minister, Rev. Tim Downs, will be our worship leader. Tim is a pastor with a great heart, and a preacher with a great message. He enjoys children and youth and has a marvelous sense of humor. The combination of his particular talents and gifts lends itself to an exciting, challenging and thought-provoking time for our young people!

In addition to Tim, Doug Stroup will be returned as our music resource person. He will present a concert for us on Saturday evening as well as lead the music for worship and assembly times. We have a great team! This will be a great weekend and can be a point of real revival for our youth, our associations and our Conference.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON – LOTS OF FREE TIME ON THE BEACH.

Applications and accompanying information (insurance forms, schedule, directions, etc.) can be obtained through your local church or through the Southeast Conference office (1-800-807-1993).

Put a Little Spice in Your Marriage ... Treat Yourselves to a Marriage Encounter Weekend

The United Church of Christ Marriage Encounter Expression will be holding their 1997 weekend in Huntsville, Alabama, April 4-6 at the Sheraton Hotel in the Huntsville/Decatur Airport. The weekend is a retreat for those of you with good marriages who wish to nurture your relationship, grow personally and as a couple, and to regain some of the

romance and infatuation you had when you first started dating. It lasts from Friday night until Sunday night; in between there is a full agenda during which you will be identifying feelings, laughing, perhaps crying, and re-discovering why you fell in love with that special person to whom you are married. It is held at a hotel so you can spend an entire weekend focusing on each other without the distractions of the telephone, pets, children, and TV. A weekend is a big-time commitment and is hard work, but the rewards are commensurate with your effort! Bill and Amy Chew, who have been involved in Marriage Encounter since 1979, are Southeastern Area coordinators and will be one of the four couples leading the weekend.

This is an opportunity all couples deserve. There are 51 other weekends to get all your “to do” lists accomplished. Bill and Amy hope you will celebrate your marriage by attending the April weekend with them! Contact Bill and Amy if you or someone in your church would like more information. Their contact information is:

Bill and Amy Chew
1401 Old Carriage Lane S.E.
Huntsville, AL 35802
Phone: 205/882-3727
e-mail: wmchew@ro.com

Social Justice News

For several years, the SEC Commission on Christian Social Justice has published a newsletter, The Social Justice Networker, which has been distributed to those individuals in the Southeast Conference who had a special interest in social justice issues. The primary mailing list for that newsletter came from the Office for Church in Society and represented those who had asked to receive their newsletter, Courage in the Struggle. This year, the SEC Commission on Christian Social Justice decided to try another approach—having material that would have been in The Social Justice Networker printed in the Southeast News so that it would reach a larger audience.

The Commission is interested in responses to this change. Those on the Networker mailing list will receive a questionnaire to return, and others who have not been on the newsletter mailing list are asked to call or write the Commission to give their response and to suggest topics of interest. Responses can go to the SEC office or to Dorothy Gager, Chairperson of the Commission on Christian Social Justice (920 Marengo Lane, Nashville, TN 37204, phone 615-292-0934, or e-mail gagerdh@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu).

Hunger Action/Just Peace Grants

Each year at the Annual Meeting, the SEC Commission on Christian Social Justice presents checks to congregations to further their work in hunger action, peace, and justice ministries. Funds for these grants come from the portion of the Hunger Action and Just Peace offerings that are generally collected in November and January respectively. When a congregation participates in one of these offerings, a percentage of the money is kept within the congregation itself, another portion goes to the national UCC body working in that area, and a third portion is retained at the Conference. In the SEC, the Commission on Christian Social Justice is responsible for disbursing funds in this last category.

Copies of the policy and procedures for allocating these funds are available from the SEC office, as are application forms. The application process is a simple one, and congregations are urged to take advantage of this opportunity to further social justice ministries on the local level.

In the past, some grants have gone for projects within a congregation, while others have gone to other organizations that are supported by the local congregation. The pool of money is not large, but sometimes even a grant of less than \$200 can make a significant difference.

Completed applications are due in the SEC office by April 1. For more information, contact your association's committee on Christian Social Justice, any member of the SEC Commission, or the SEC office.

Issues Briefing Book

What does the Lord require of you but to love mercy, seek justice, and walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

It is sometimes terribly difficult to apply this statement of our responsibility to the complex social and political issues that we face. The UCC Justice and Peace Ministry has compiled a book that seeks to help with this task of discernment. The 1996 Issues Briefing Book is designed to link UCC social policy statement with current events.

The book begins with a guide to writing letters to elected officials. Seventeen topic areas are covered in the book, each with a description of the issue, a list of action/resources, and names of specific individuals within the UCC to contact for further information.

The topics covered include global concerns (Africa, East Asia & the Pacific, Southern & Southeast Asia, Middle East, Europe, UN/Global Security) and important issues faced by this country (Environment, Hunger, Economic Justice, Health Care, Education, Civil & Human Rights, Justice for

Women, Media Ethics & Advocacy, Racial Justice, Immigration/Refugees, and Equal Rights for Gays and Lesbians).

This resource is available from the Justice and Peace Ministry, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100.

Teaching Tolerance

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a valuable resource for those concerned with justice issues that affect this part of the country. It operates three major programs—Militia Task Force, Klanwatch, and Teaching Tolerance. The latter is a curriculum resource for grades K-12 designed to help children look at issues of peace, community, and diversity.

A set of 8 beautiful posters is available without cost to teachers of grades K-12. Each 18-by-24-inch poster features a full-color picture and a brief quotations that addresses a concern for humanity. A study guide is included with each set of posters.

Requests for these posters should be on school letterhead stationery. The posters and additional information about this curriculum or about the Southern Poverty Law Center can be obtained from Teaching Tolerance, c/o Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104.

Teleconference

On September 14, a national teleconference was held on “Freedom of Conscience and the Radical Religious Right.”

Andrew Young was the moderator of a four-person panel composed of Ray Suarez from National Public Radio, Congressional Representative Maxine Waters of California, Tim Crater of the National Association of Evangelicals, and David Beckmann from Bread from the World.

Some thoughts and opinions expressed in the teleconference are presented here.

The Radical Religious Right

Not a single body, the Radical Religious Right claims 3 million members, is composed of many organizations including the Christian Coalition, the Eagle Forum, Focus on the Family, National Right to Life, Operation Rescue, and others.

Their focus has been on organizing at the local political level.

Suarez noted that they grab the high ground in debates where press coverage is.

Andrew Young

Tolerance is what we want.

No one wants to deal with the first part of Martin Luther King's Dream Speech about the bad check given to the poor which came back marked insufficient funds.

Election Day is judgment day when we can make Christian witness in the voting booth. The AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Church requires its members to be registered to vote and to vote regularly.

This is not a war between sides, but our voice of the debate is not being heard sufficiently in the public arena and on Election Day.

We tend to appeal to reason and conscience without giving the backing of the church.

The rise of fundamentalism among Christians, Muslims and others is evidence of people who have not adjusted to the challenges of the 21st century.

It is a moral absolute that each person has the right to experience and live out God's will for himself or herself.

Maxine Waters

We must be tolerant, but forceful.

We need to connect the Bible to what's happening in everyday lives. This should be an integral part of what happens in church. The key to change lies in organizing.

David Beckmann

The only group whose dependency we want to end is poor people.

I've heard nothing from the Radical Religious Right about poverty.

In the next few years, we will probably see more hunger. The churches' response needs to be more than taking up money; they need to look at the political realities also.

Tim Crater

"Many of the individuals who belong to the Radical Religious Right do not agree with or understand the extent of the political agenda. They are good people who feel strongly about one or two issues."

Ray Suarez

The leaders of the Radical Religious Right use Christianity as an organizing principle and announce themselves as Christians. Others tend to present their ideas in a secular fashion and don't say, Here I am as a Christian supporting this cause.

We're *a la carte* about separation of church and state. Sometimes we like it, and sometimes we don't. It is unsettled territory.

The Radical Religious Right has captured the culture of the times. It takes in lots of people who are not in the church or not agreeing on everything.

We have to meet commitment with commitment.

From the Nashville Group

Openness to diversity has been perceived as passivity. This is a problem for liberals.

The literal word is always a word from the past. The Spirit is contemporary. ***Ted Braun.***

There is need for action on the association and Conference levels, not just national. Are we willing to be an alternative voice to the Christian Coalition, not necessarily opposing them, but giving an alternative voice? ***Ozzie Schrag.***

The Radical Religious Right addresses good people's fears without first addressing their spiritual needs, using a spiritual pretext for rallying large numbers of people.

The more we raise these issues, the more we thrive. We are revived by being honest about who we are and lifting a compassionate vision of Jesus. ***John Mingus.***

FREE—ADULT BIBLE STUDY MATERIAL AVAILABLE

"Ten key events from the Bible"—one leader guide and eleven learner books—Augsburg Press, Bible Basics for Adults. Good material! Call Pleasant Hill Community Church at (615) 277-3193.

A letter from First Thankful Baptist Church, Estill, SC

March 4, 1997

Dear Christian Friends:

It is with pleasure that I write to you on behalf of our church family. We want you to know how much we appreciate your gifts towards the rebuilding of First Thankful Baptist Church. It is so nice of you to come to our rescue in our time of need. This is evidence that you, along with all the others who have contributed one way or the other, are true believers in Christ. Not only do you

believe, but you also exercise your belief as well. We want to thank you from the depths of our hearts.

Someone once wrote to us expressing their sympathy in our loss and said, "If God can raise Christ from the dead, He surely can raise a church from the ashes." I am a living witness that he is so right. I know God is still working miracles!!

Deacon Sanders, Rev. Bennie L. Campbell, Mrs. Bettie E. Manuel

Burned UCC Church in Greensboro, NC Next Church to be Rebuilt

The builders and skilled workers from the membership of First Thankful Baptist Church have volunteered to be the first crew, along with the Rev. Charlie Lord and UCC crew from Pleasant Hill, TN to work at Pleasant Ridge UCC in Greensboro, NC. Other First Thankful members have volunteered to join UCC workers in Greensboro to drywall and paint. The first crew will stud in the Pleasant Ridge Church.

Call to Christian Educators Calling all Christian Educators!

We recently received a request from Patricia Goldberg of the Division of Education and Publication of the United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministries, asking us to update our list of "Employed Lay Educators." The United Church of Christ maintains a roster of employed lay educators, people who are employed 20 or more hours a week, and this list can include retired educators. If you know of people who are employed in our congregations who are lay educators, or if you yourself are one, please alert us in the Conference Office so we can submit those names to Patricia Goldberg. We look forward to hearing from you. *Thanks!*

Christian Growth & Miracles in the Now

Christian growth and miracles continue to happen. This Easter Season, First Thankful participated in its first Ash Wednesday service, ever. A moving service was witnessed as the Rev. Leigh Pick told of the Monday overnight shipment of ashes to three churches participating in the work crews: St. John UCC, York, PA; St. Stephen's UCC, New Holland, PA; and a United Methodist Church in Pennsylvania.

Along with First Thankful, these three Pennsylvania churches simultaneously held services and were told the history of the ashes and their significance. The UCC ministers, Austin Chinault and Leigh Pick, brought the ashes from the Pennsylvania church's charred palm branches added to each Palm Sunday for generation(s) and mixed them with ashes from the charred church pews of First Thankful. Rev. Leigh Pick said, "First Thankful burned, and one year later to the day, we celebrate Ash Wednesday."

First Thankful is so very grateful. They called this noon to say they would house a crew working under "Christmas in April," a Washington, D.C.-based help organization, as they pass through to their work site in Florida, but are planning to have lunch for them to carry on their return trip home.

I ask a little of these fine Christians and First Thankful gives everything! How could we have been so lucky to get First Thankful as our first church to help rebuild—we have grown to truly know them as sisters and brothers!

Anne Ariail, UCC Rebuild On-Site Consultant

"Easterfest"

A celebration—a festive spirit—a sharing of love

Saturday, April 19th, is an opportunity to fellowship with one another and to celebrate our faith through learning, worship and fellowship. The Alabama-Tennessee Association invites people of all ages and from all areas to join in this celebration, hosted by United Church of Huntsville, AL. Workshops will begin around 11:00 a.m., and you have the opportunity to choose among six of them:

"Children and Faith"

"Teens and Spiritual Growth"

"Drama and Worship"

"Storytelling and Spiritual Growth"

"Music and Worship"

"Environmental Awareness & Spirituality"

Dr. David Buttrick, Professor of Homiletics at Vanderbilt Theological Seminary, will be the "keynoter" for the even. The noon meal will be around 1 p.m. and worship about 2 p.m.

Put it on your calendar now and join us for a fun-filled day of sharing God's love with one another.

OCWM GIVING DECEMBER 31, 1996

CHURCH	4th Quarter 10/1-12/31/96	Year End Total 1996 OCWM
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Alabama-Tennessee Association

Alpine, King's Chapel	118.00	380.00
Athens, Trinity Congregational	0.00	300.00
Belvidere, 1st United Church	3,682.00	7,925.00
Birmingham, 1st Congregational	1,700.00	6,600.00
Birmingham, Pilgrim	1,350.00	5,400.00
Chattanooga, Pilgrim	4,846.33	14,880.00
Chattanooga, Sheares Memorial	0.00	0.00
Crossville, United Christian (UCWF)	140.00	340.00
Crossville, United Christian	825.00	3,816.50
Cullman, St. John's	2,700.00	8,100.00
Deer Lodge, Congregational	300.00	1,200.00
Fairfield Glade, Community	925.00	3,700.00
Garden City, Congregational Christian	115.50	462.00
Hanceville, Mountain Grove	0.00	0.00
Huntsville, United Church	3,500.00	6,000.00
Knoxville, Church of the Savior	1,400.00	1,400.00
Marion, First Congregational	200.00	200.00
Montgomery, First	6,300.00	10,100.00
Nashville, 1st United Church	1,250.01	5,000.04
Nashville, Brookmeade	1,425.00	2,392.25
Nashville, Howard	600.00	600.00
Pleasant Hill, Community	6,714.00	18,050.00
Sweetwater, First	0.00	250.00
Talladega, First Congregational	0.00	0.00
Tougaloo, Union UCC	0.00	0.00
Waverly, United Community	114.73	194.73
TOTAL	38,205.57	97,290.52

East Alabama-West Georgia Association

Alexander City, 1st Congregational Christian	0.00	0.00
Columbus, United Congregational Christian	0.00	0.00
Dadeville, Elder UCC	288.00	773.00
East Tallassee, Congregational Christian	95.00	395.00
Five Points, State Line	0.00	0.00
LaFayette, Pleasant Grove	573.00	912.00
LaGrange, Hillside	0.00	0.00
LaGrange, United	87.00	309.00
Lanett	1,181.00	3,549.00

Phenix City, Russell Woods	380.00	1,140.00
Pine Mountain, Oak Grove	1,140.00	1,140.00
Roanoke, Antioch Congregational Christian	0.00	570.00
Roanoke, Bethany	0.00	0.00
Roanoke, New Hope	0.00	570.00
Roanoke, North Main	380.00	950.00
Wadley, Corinth Christian	238.00	476.00
Woodbury, Jones Chapel	988.00	2,964.00
TOTAL	5,350.00	13,748.00

Georgia-South Carolina Association

Atlanta, Center Congregational	175.00	175.00
Atlanta, Central Congregational	7,500.00	30,000.00
Atlanta, Central Congregational Women	0.00	200.00
Atlanta, First Congregational UCC	1,727.65	1,727.65
Atlanta, Good Shepherd Community	600.00	600.00
Atlanta, Rush Memorial	0.00	0.00
Beachton, Evergreen Congregational	0.00	0.00
Charleston, Circular	1,500.00	6,000.00
Charleston, Plymouth	1,500.00	1,500.00
Columbia, Covenant UCC	0.00	325.00
Demorest, Federated	0.00	236.12
Jonesboro, Trinity	0.00	165.00
Marietta, Amistad	0.00	0.00
Marietta, Pilgrimage	3,492.00	10,476.00
Midway, Congregational	500.00	950.00
Savannah, First Congregational	800.00	1,600.00
Thomasville, Bethany Congregational	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	17,794.65	53,954.77

South Alabama-Northwest Florida Association

Andalusia, Antioch Congregational	750.00	750.00
Andalusia, First Congregational	220.00	605.00
Baker, Good Hope Congregational	0.00	0.00
Baker, Pyron Chapel Congregational	0.00	0.00
Brantley, Liberty Congregational	150.00	450.00
Clio, New Hope	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	1,120.00	1,805.00

AROUND THE CONFERENCE

Churches in Search:

For Associate Pastor:

Central Congregational, Atlanta

St. John's United, Cullman

For Pastor:

First Congregational, Atlanta
Congregational Morgan County Parish, Deer Lodge
Trinity United, Hampton
United Congregational Christian, LaGrange
First Congregational, Marion
First Congregational Christian, Montgomery
Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain
North Main, Roanoke
United Community, Waverly

New Pastors:

We welcome:

George Blair to First United, Belvidere – George preached his first Sunday there on March 2nd and still made it to Tim's installation in Atlanta!

Dennis Lott, who is preaching at Mountain Grove Congregational Christian, Hanceville, and who has applied for licensure.

Barry Brooke, licensed pastor at Pleasant Grove, LaFayette.

Frank McCook, who is serving as interim pastor at North Main, Roanoke.

Installations:

December 15, 1996 – Bennie Liggins, Community Congregational, Montgomery

January 26, 1997 – Budd Friend-Jones, Central Congregational, Atlanta

March 2, 1997 – Timothy C. Downs, as minister of the Southeast Conference

March 9, 1997 – Herbert Carey, First Congregational, Savannah

Ordinations:

February 8 – Robert Cox at Congregational Church, Midway

February 16 – Elizabeth Clement at First Congregational, Atlanta

Arthur Dailey has been approved for Ecclesiastical Council 3/23 for association ordination (EAL/WGA)

Commissioning:

March 2 – Erna Bryant, commissioned for lay ministry at First Congregational Church, Atlanta as Coordinator for Capital Giving.

Prayers and Concerns:

Please keep Joe Brown in your prayers as he goes back in for chemotherapy on March 23rd. Although he has been ill, he preached (his favorite thing to do) at Pyron Chapel around the beginning of this month.

Our hearts go out to:

Retired Associate Conference Minister Mitchell C. Johnson and his family on the death March 9th of Helen, beloved wife and mother ...

Barbara Manning and family on the death of R. Kenneth Manning, husband, father, ordained clergy in the AL/TN Association.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR, 1997

March

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 22 – Sat. | Annual Meeting Planning, 12 noon, Birmingham First |
| 23 – Sun. | Palm Sunday – Tim preaches in Congregational Christian, East Tallassee |
| 27 – Thurs. | Maundy Thursday |
| 28 – Fri. | Good Friday |
| 31 – Sun. | Easter Sunday – Time serves Holy Communion, Mountain Grove, Hanceville |

April

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 12 – Sat. | Annual Meeting Planning, 12 noon, Birmingham First |
| 13 – Sun. | Tim preaches, United Christian Church, Crossville
Rev. Vant Hardaway installed, 3 p.m., First United, Sweetwater |
| 16 – Wed. | AL/TN Church & Ministry, Pilgrim, Chattanooga, 10 a.m. |
| 18-20 Fr.-Su. | Mini-Camp (youth & adult), Panama City, FL |
| 19 – Sat. | AL/TN “Easterfest Celebration” 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., United Church, Huntsville |
| 21-23 Mo.-We. | Stewardship Workshop, “Graham Cluster,” St. Simons Island |
| 26 – Sat. | New Pastors/Clergy Orientation, 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Conference Office |
| 27 – Sun. | Tim preaches in Congregational Christian, Lanett |

May

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 4 – Sun. | Tim preaches in Covenant UCC, Columbia |
| 5-7 Mo.-We. | Tim off to Cleveland, Council of Conference Ministers |
| 17 – Sat. | GA/SC Executive meeting, 9 a.m.
Annual Meeting Planning, 12 noon, Birmingham First |
| 24 – Sat. | GA/SC Church & Ministry Committee, 8:30 a.m. |

June

- 1 – Sun. Tim preaches in United Community Church, Waverly
7 – Sat. General Synod XXI training for delegates, Huntsville, time to be announced
8 – Sun. Time preaches in Community Congregational, Montgomery
13 –15 Fr.-Su. Southeast Conference Annual Meeting, Shocco Springs, AL
29 – Sun. Tim preaches in Congregational Christian, Midway

July

- 2-3, We.-Th. Tim off to Columbus, Ohio, Council of Conference Ministers
4-8, Fr.-We. General Synod XXI, Columbus, Ohio

THE SOUTHEAST NEWS

Published by the Southeast Conference
United Church of Christ

Conference Minister, Timothy C. Downs

Office Administrator, Nan Wright

Moderator, Annie Neal

Vice Moderator, Jimmy Pilkington

Secretary, Susan Ewing

Treasurer, David Speno

Alabama-Tennessee Association Moderator, Ed Schneider

East Alabama-West Georgia Association Moderator, Jimmy Pilkington

Georgia-South Carolina Association Moderator, Larry Calbert

South Alabama-Northwest Florida Association Moderator, Marvin Brand

Publication schedule: February, May, August, October, December

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The preceding was a transcription from the original publication, except for photographs and associated captions, a registration form for the Conference Annual Meeting on page 5, and an invitation to the building dedication service for First Thankful Baptist Church in Estill, South Carolina on

page 7. Neither the original nor the transcription are copyrighted or have rights reserved; they are in the public domain for free use. Copies of the original may be obtained from the Congregational Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

This transcription was recorded on October 30, 2013 by Mike Stroud, director of Project 66-16, an initiative to record, compile and write the history of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ.

